Statement of

DALE N. BOSWORTH
Chief, Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture

Concerning
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting me to testify on the occasion of the Forest Service Centennial. This anniversary commemorates not only the proud history of our agency, but also the fundamental concept of conservation. One hundred years ago, on February 1, 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt signed into law a bill passed by Congress assigning the management of the Nation's forest reserves to the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Forestry. On July 1, 1905, the newly named Forest Service began operations with some 500 employees and a visionary leader, Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot.

I am proud to be the fifteenth Chief, representing over 30,000 dedicated employees at today's hearing. I have worked for the Forest Service for nearly forty years, and was raised in a Forest Service family, so I've known Forest Service employees all my life. I've seen them go through some ups and downs as times have changed, and I've drawn inspiration from their tremendous dedication to conservation.

It all began in 1891, when Congress changed the policy of disposing public lands for private purchase and gave the President power to set aside forest reserves for public purposes. This revolutionary idea set the United States apart from all other nations in the world.

The 1897 Organic Act initiated management goals for the forest reserves that included improvement and protection, securing favorable water flows, and providing a continuous supply of timber. When the Forest Service was created in 1905, there were 60 forest reserves (they were renamed national forests in 1907) covering 56 million acres. Today the Forest Service manages 193 million acres in the national forest system, with 155 National Forests, 20 National Grasslands, and one Tallgrass Prairie in 44 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. We have the leading research and development organization for forest and rangeland sciences. We are also responsible for promoting the sound management of all the nation's forests, both public and private, by offering support and assistance for state, tribal, and private forestry. And, because today's forestry issues are increasingly global, we have strong international programs.

As we look to the future, it is appropriate to consider the Forest Service mission statement: "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." While this statement may seem clear, it is inherently ambiguous. Different people may attach different meanings to the words, and differing needs can, and often do, create conflict. However, the ambiguity inherent in the Forest Service mission has given us the flexibility needed to

adjust to changing times. Unless we can adjust to change, the Forest Service cannot sustain the changing landscapes we care for, nor can we meet the changing needs of the people we serve.

Forest Service history bears that out. In the past century, we have been through several very different eras of national forest management in response to society's needs, and now we are moving into a new one.

A century ago, our nation faced a crisis caused by the unrestrained exploitation of our natural resources. The opening of the West in the years following the Civil War brought tremendous change to relatively pristine landscapes. As railroads opened the West, the natural resources along their tracks were often overused. In many cases, unregulated timber operations and overgrazing resulted in severe erosion. Elk and other game were hunted to near extinction. Wildfires consumed forests and communities.

The conservation era grew out of that crisis. In the US Department of Agriculture, a bureau of forestry was created to work with private landowners to improve forestry techniques and to promote systematic studies of commercial forest trees. These functions would later become the state and private forestry and research branches of the Forest Service. The national system of forest reserves established in 1891 became the basis for today's national forest system. When management responsibility for the forest reserves was transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Forest Service in 1905, the new agency published the *Use Book*, which provided management guidelines for resource use.

Among the regulations for timber cutting, grazing, fire fighting, and land uses was the now famous statement: "where conflicting interests must be reconciled the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

With the active involvement of Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot, President Theodore Roosevelt expanded the national forest system, which grew from 56 million acres in 1905 to 172 million acres in 1910. After the 1911 Weeks Act authorized purchase of private lands, the national forest system expanded further into the eastern and southern United States. It is difficult to imagine now, but most of these treasured forests were acquired as abandoned cut-over, farmed-out, or mine-wasted lands.

The next era was one of social responsibility in response to the Great Depression. To reverse erosion that brought about Dustbowl conditions, the state and private forestry and research branches helped plant shelterbelts in states from North Dakota to Texas. Every national forest had at least one Civilian Conservation Corps camp, giving jobs to thousands of young unemployed Americans. The CCC helped to control fires, restore landscapes, and they built a tremendous amount of infrastructure, including roads, trails, cabins, campgrounds, ranger stations, and lookout towers.

World War II brought an end to the CCC and the nation began a new effort to supply wood and other materials for the war. The Forest Service research branch expanded its mission to fulfill military needs, developing synthetic rubber, for example. During this

time, the Forest Service worked with state foresters to establish the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention Campaign to protect forests from fire. The Smokey Bear fire prevention campaign was born of this partnership.

The end of World War II ushered in a new era with a focus on timber production. The national forests were needed to provide wood for a growing housing demand. From the 1960s through the 1980s, every administration, with strong congressional support, called for more timber from the national forests. By the 1980s, the national forest system produced 20 to 25 percent of our nation's timber needs annually. Under its multiple use mission, the Forest Service also protected and delivered numerous other values, goods, and services, including range for livestock, clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, wilderness areas, and recreation opportunities.

The postwar period also saw the development of a system of multifunctional research centers and experimental forests supporting forest and range management needs. The state and private forestry branch made advances in forest protection and enhancement through pest and fire control.

Beginning in the 1960s, recreation use grew; the demand for resources increased, ecological concerns expanded, and public values began to change, bringing about a series of new laws. These laws included the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, the Wilderness Act of 1964 and an array of environmental legislation in the 1970s, such as

the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the National Forest Management Act.

These new laws provided greater access to the courts for citizens when they did not agree with Forest Service management decisions. The Forest Service learned that the public wanted more of a say in forest management and they wanted us to focus more on delivering values and services like wildlife habitat, clean water, wilderness and heritage resource protection, and recreation.

By the 1990s, under the combined pressures of delivering multiple goods and services, including large amounts of timber, while preserving other values, the Forest Service's ability to meet public expectations was overwhelmed. During this transitional period, the Forest Service began moving toward a new ecosystem-based model of land management. This transition was challenging but necessary.

It was necessary to address four issues that pose grave threats to the well-being of our nation's forests in the 21st century. Whether federal, state, tribal or private forest lands, I believe the public's attention should be focused on what I call the Four Threats.

First is fire and fuels. In several of the last few years we have witnessed fire effects that are far outside the historic range of variability, with our worst fire seasons in 50 years. Wildfires have led to the loss of dozens of lives and thousands of homes, and we've had record firefighting costs. In the last Congress, this committee played a major role in

passage of the first major legislation affecting national forest management in a generation, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, which responds to the threat to ecosystems from wildfire and fuels. The Forest Service has given implementation of this act high priority, and in fiscal year 2004, we met or exceeded our goals for the treatment of hazardous fuels within the wildland-urban interface.

Second is the spread of invasive species. While not as dramatic as wildfires, invasive species can be as devastating economically and ecologically, and the rate of new introductions has been increasing. The Forest Service recently released a strategy to guide invasive species work through four program elements: prevention, early detection and rapid response, control and management, and rehabilitation and restoration.

Third is the loss of open space. Every minute, America loses more than 3 acres of open space to development, resulting in fragmentation of valuable habitat that many plants and animals need to survive. Loss of "wide open spaces" diminishes the cultural heritage that is part of the American tradition.

Fourth is unmanaged outdoor recreation. In many places, recreational use is exceeding our management capacity and damaging resources. The unmanaged use of off-highway vehicles is a prime example of this problem.

The Forest Service has focused on these threats over the past several years, and we are making strides to address them. At the same time as we focus on these, we also have a

large backlog of work to complete, including the repair of roads, culverts, and aging facilities; remediation of abandoned mines; and restoration of unhealthy watersheds.

Beyond these threats to our nation's forests, we face larger conservation challenges. Today we live in a global economy, and market dynamics are challenging some longstanding assumptions about delivering goods and services from forests in the United States, whether public or private. As noted in the 2005 US Department of Agriculture Trade Forecast, it is likely that importation of wood products will to continue to grow. This has some serious potential implications, such as contributing to unsustainable logging practices in other countries, reducing the industrial infrastructure needed to process wood in the United States, and even increasing incentives for forest landowners to sell land for development, resulting in additional loss of open space.

Although traditional approaches such as conservation easements can play a role, other incentives may also be helpful for private landowners to stay on the land and manage it sustainably. Of course, maintaining national forests and grasslands for their intrinsic value to society also provides a public good. These issues are complex, and we will be working on them in the years to come.

The Forest Service is at a crucial moment in history. The challenges I have outlined will set the agenda for its next century of service. The Forest Service is uniquely positioned to meet these challenges through its strong traditions of collaboration, science, and flexibility.

During our Centennial year, the Forest Service has taken the opportunity to reflect on where we have been, our role today, and where we are headed in the next century. We've held a series of Centennial forums throughout the nation involving hundreds of federal, state, local, tribal, and private individuals and organizations, culminating in a Centennial Congress held in January of this year. It commemorated an event in January 1905, when a similar group of people gathered in Washington DC for the first American Forest Congress. Recommendations from that first Congress resulted in the creation of the Forest Service.

The Centennial forums have helped us learn more about what the American people want of a future Forest Service. We received hundreds of comments, which we are still sorting through, though some major themes emerged. They included finding ways to serve an increasingly diverse population; increasing accountability and developing new business models to maintain organizational flexibility; focusing on biomass utilization; addressing recreation challenges brought by increasing demands; integrating science and technology; and increasing partnership and collaboration to work across jurisdictional and ownership boundaries.

In whatever the Forest Service ends up doing, it is clear that the American public wants us to work with others in facilitating a *collective* commitment to conservation. Today, the Forest Service is focused more than ever on improving what we call community-based forestry.

We are taking several approaches to refocus our efforts toward community-based forestry. The President's Healthy Forests Initiative includes an array of activities to improve the health of forests at risk from fire, insects, disease, and other threats. It involves communities, states, tribes, and citizens working together through development and implementation of community fire plans.

Stewardship contracting is another great way to involve the community in managing the land, by working together with successful bidders to outline desired landscape outcomes, and reinvesting the proceeds into restoration work.

The new planning rule, on which this committee recently held a hearing, will encourage more effective public participation by reducing the time it takes to complete a plan from about 7 years to about 3 years. It will also allow us to focus on issues in the future more quickly and with more flexibility to incorporate the best available science into planning as we learn. The process includes independent third-party audits and increases our accountability and the transparency of our monitoring process, something the public and interested communities have asked for.

The Forest Service is improving some of our processes to make them more responsive to current conditions by reducing gridlock. We are also transforming our business operations to provide more effective, efficient administrative services for employees and the public at a lower cost, so that we can invest more fully in our primary resource mission and to address future needs.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, you have asked me to reflect upon the Forest Service's greatest achievement in its first century. In my opinion, our greatest achievement is undoubtedly the nation's forests and grasslands themselves, both public and private, and all that they encompass. They are a safe haven for many plants and animals, a refuge for citizens seeking recreation and rejuvenation, a provider of products and services, an economic engine, a source of clean air and water, and a legacy for our children.

One hundred years ago, our nation looked into the future and decided to set aside public lands for the public good. Through restoration and sustainable management, with the tools that the Forest Service uniquely provides, these lands have become more treasured than our predecessors could have imagined. Our legacy to the future is to continue that conservation ethic with others, here in this nation and around the globe. We commit ourselves to the tasks ahead with hope and optimism, because we believe that this Centennial is a new opportunity to join together with others in a collective commitment to conservation.

I look forward to continuing to work with the committee. I appreciate the committee's role in shaping the statutory framework and providing the oversight that has allowed the Forest Service and its dedicated employees to be wise stewards of the public's national forests and grasslands over this past century. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.